

ARTIFICIAL MARBLE

By Fanny Heaslip Lea

It Was a Gorgeous, Exotic Thing, and Isabel Wore It Because Her Throat Was Delicate.

SHE never knew why she had bought it. It had lain in a drawer for three whole years, and she had never worn it. It did not, as they say in the little shops, look like her. It was not in the least her kind of thing.

Sometimes she touched it, feeling about in the drawer for something else. Sometimes she even said to herself that she would send it to this one or that for Christmas, or on her birthday—yet she never did send it away. She couldn't quite bring herself to do that.

She never wore it. But she kept it. And she was not one to keep things without reason. It rather annoyed her, sometimes—to remember how much she had paid for it—never having worn it.

She kept it, slightly scornful both of it and of herself. She felt it might serve at least one useful purpose. It might remind her not to be such a fool—next time. Not to buy a thing and take it home with her merely because its texture caressed her fingers, its color drugged her eyes.

When she found it she had been looking for a sensible muffler. That alone was enough to show her the absurdity of her buying such perishable trash. That it hadn't proved perishable was owing entirely to the fact that she had laid it away in a box under piles of black and gray silk stockings, fine linen handkerchiefs, gray gloves and white.

No wonder Isabel couldn't wear it! No woman named Isabel could. Least of all, an Isabel like Isabel Sheridan, whose selfish it was to be at all times fastidiously inconspicuous, who abhorred extremes in garment or behavior as affronting the aristocratic ease which blossomed on the purple sea.

Isabel's ancestors had lived in great, high-ceilinged houses, set in great gardens, behind great gates. It altered Isabel's conception of her own obliged nobility not at all that she lived in a small apartment in a brown-stone city of a street with no maid to look after her, with a fireplace, it is true (in a town where fireplaces are dearer than any pound of flesh), with built-in bookcases and a small, mellow lamp, but still an apartment, not a house.

Isabel earned the apartment by the sweat of her smooth, white brow. She wrote books for girls, which brought her in a rather comfortable income—and, delightful, if somewhat anemic, wealth. It brought her in nothing much at all. An occasional bit of politeness from an elderly editor, perhaps.

Her editors, where Isabel was concerned, sufficed, apparently, for masculine contact. By virtue perhaps of the books for girls, she was known as a woman's woman, spending long, solitary, contented hours alone in the apartment of an evening, going to concerts, to theaters with other women, which in the minds of some shameless sisters is as good as alone.

There was, of course, Jefferson Poole—but as his grandfather's chance to have been Isabel's grandfather's overseer, and his grandmother Isabel's grandmother's maid, she could not count on Isabel's ordered existence.

She allowed him—since they happened to live in the same city—to go by her fire twice a month or so; that was all. And she felt it, at that, a concession. He did not keep his hands off a girl's shoulder, or his long, strong, nervous fingers were stained with nicotine, sometimes even with paint. He wore unspeakable ties and reached up to go shiny at the elbows. From choice as well as necessity. Of course, occasionally, he achieved a bit of work that Isabel might be proud of. But the ordinary. So far out of the ordinary that nobody wanted it.

With your knowledge of black and white, she had once reproached him aloofly, "you could get all the work you could handle if only you would keep at it." Why will you mess about in colors?

"Because I love 'em," said Jefferson Poole shortly. "I have a charming mouth and narrow, skeptical, smiling black eyes. When he looked at Isabel and he ran a hand through his dark hair with a gesture which to her spelled exasperation; to her, cheap melodrama.

"When I could be writing 'Love's Awakening,'" he inquired testily, "I fancy you flatter yourself, my dear," said Jefferson Poole, "but we'll let that pass. Point is, we each have our kind of work. I'm a writer, you're a painter. I want to paint; you want to write. We're both failures."

Isabel whitened with rage. She held her smooth, brown head in the air. She tightened her lips. She withdrew an intangible loveliness from her face as one withdraws a candle from a window.

"I make an excellent livin'," she said. "So does a cook," said Jefferson Poole. "With a good deal more reason for boasting."

SHE showed him the door that time, but he came back in a week. He had no pride, the grandson of the overseer and the English maid—he always came back, offering by way of explanation.

"All the other women in the world are so clever. Your simplicity rests me, Isabel."

When he talked of other women he was on familiar ground. He knew his subject. She had on her rare visits to his studio, which was on a quiet street in a pseudo-artistic part of town, seen incontrovertible evidence of feminine interest—a book of silly poems, markedly initialled, "J. H. H.," in a paper-filled pot beneath the north light.

No man—even Isabel knew—no man but her hair set it in a glass of water on the table. "In place of butter," she corrected—for they were having tea and Jefferson had forgotten to provide that homely but indispensable lubricant.

He often laughed. He often laughed at Isabel. Next time she came to see him, he had not only not only butter but strawberry jam. That was Jefferson Poole. Conspicuously, he overdid things—except when he forgot to do them at all.

Of all the men in an overworked world, he was the least appropriate companion for Isabel. He offended her every finger-tip and nerve-end. He was not a man of the kind of him—thought of him as little as she was able—for the most part drifting along coolly and pleasantly enough, among the sketches and the watercolor and her flowers, writing ridiculously amiable, wordy volumes about Dorothy on boarding school, Dorothy in Dorothy's camp, Dorothy in Dorothy's camp. Dorothy goes West—a family of fatuous chronicles surprisingly well known to the juvenile trade.

She drew them from some extraordinary reservoir of *jeune fille* experience—almost with her mind on other things. For relaxation she wrote her pretty, wistful, spiderish poems. And found them sufficient.

She lived an even, reasonable, well-bred, consistent life—and the purple scarf lay waiting.

Isabel tried it once across the back of a tall, carved chair—for purely decorative purposes. Even the chair couldn't wear it. The scarf made every other thing in the room look faded—and chilly—and dim with dust.

She thought for the hundredth time, "How could I have been such a fool as to buy it? I loathe the feeling I've been a fool about anything. It will never be any sort of use to me. It will lie there the rest of my life. I shall never wear that wretched thing."

But she did. She wore it the day she said good-bye to Jefferson Poole. It happened queerly; not in the least of her own will, but it happened this fashion:

She hadn't seen him in weeks. They had quarreled. They always quarreled if they saw enough of each other. Although he had telephoned once or twice, Isabel had somehow missed him. She might have bridged the gap, but she made no effort.

When he telephoned again one forenoon late in February and said, "Come and eat lunch with me" (just that, at first; no conciliatory preliminaries),

Isabel said that she would have a chicken sandwich and a pot of Ceylon tea. She kept on her coat till the steak and the sandwich arrived. Then she slipped it off and tried to slip the scarf away with it. That's a wonderful thing! Never saw you wear it before."

"I never have worn it before. I'm only wearing it today because my fur small black hat with no trimming and no overshoe."

If the scarf had to be worn, if there were nothing else available with which to protect a delicate throat (Isabel was fastidious about colds, as about everything else), at least coat and hat and brook should be of the plainest black. And overshoes lend a denier cry of respectability.

SHE left the apartment at 12:30 o'clock, black coat buttoned high, black hat drawn low, and the newest wisp of violet, splashed with amber and scarlet and green, showing (in spite of her) beneath one ear.

Jefferson Poole was waiting for her. "Well, did I flatten you out? Have you recovered?"

"From what?" asked Isabel coolly. He turned, steering her toward the restaurant.

"You sounded startled when I told you I was going."

Naturally, said Isabel. He continued quite casually: "Didn't know it myself a week ago."

"Are you going to stay?"

"If I can get away with it."

Isabel wouldn't ask. She wouldn't humiliate him. "There's a waiter."

She had always to prompt Jefferson Poole in the matters of waiters and taxis and such. Isabel liked food to be ordered suavely, with low-voiced authority in things requiring choice.

"How about a steak?" was the commonest inspiration of Jefferson Poole. He was apt to add hashed brown potatoes, and he always insisted on ice cream. This time proved no exception.

Isabel said that she would have a chicken sandwich and a pot of Ceylon tea. She kept on her coat till the steak and the sandwich arrived. Then she slipped it off and tried to slip the scarf away with it. That's a wonderful thing! Never saw you wear it before."

"I never have worn it before. I'm only wearing it today because my fur small black hat with no trimming and no overshoe."

If the scarf had to be worn, if there were nothing else available with which to protect a delicate throat (Isabel was fastidious about colds, as about everything else), at least coat and hat and brook should be of the plainest black. And overshoes lend a denier cry of respectability.

SHE left the apartment at 12:30 o'clock, black coat buttoned high, black hat drawn low, and the newest wisp of violet, splashed with amber and scarlet and green, showing (in spite of her) beneath one ear.

Jefferson Poole was waiting for her. "Well, did I flatten you out? Have you recovered?"

"From what?" asked Isabel coolly. He turned, steering her toward the restaurant.

"You sounded startled when I told you I was going."

Naturally, said Isabel. He continued quite casually: "Didn't know it myself a week ago."

"Are you going to stay?"

"If I can get away with it."

Isabel wouldn't ask. She wouldn't humiliate him. "There's a waiter."

She had always to prompt Jefferson Poole in the matters of waiters and taxis and such. Isabel liked food to be ordered suavely, with low-voiced authority in things requiring choice.

"How about a steak?" was the commonest inspiration of Jefferson Poole. He was apt to add hashed brown potatoes, and he always insisted on ice cream. This time proved no exception.

Isabel said that she would have a chicken sandwich and a pot of Ceylon tea. She kept on her coat till the steak and the sandwich arrived. Then she slipped it off and tried to slip the scarf away with it. That's a wonderful thing! Never saw you wear it before."

"I never have worn it before. I'm only wearing it today because my fur small black hat with no trimming and no overshoe."

If the scarf had to be worn, if there were nothing else available with which to protect a delicate throat (Isabel was fastidious about colds, as about everything else), at least coat and hat and brook should be of the plainest black. And overshoes lend a denier cry of respectability.

SHE left the apartment at 12:30 o'clock, black coat buttoned high, black hat drawn low, and the newest wisp of violet, splashed with amber and scarlet and green, showing (in spite of her) beneath one ear.

Jefferson Poole was waiting for her. "Well, did I flatten you out? Have you recovered?"

"From what?" asked Isabel coolly. He turned, steering her toward the restaurant.

"You sounded startled when I told you I was going."

Naturally, said Isabel. He continued quite casually: "Didn't know it myself a week ago."

"Are you going to stay?"

"If I can get away with it."

Isabel wouldn't ask. She wouldn't humiliate him. "There's a waiter."

She had always to prompt Jefferson Poole in the matters of waiters and taxis and such. Isabel liked food to be ordered suavely, with low-voiced authority in things requiring choice.

Isabel fairly writhed. For one thing, the word "flesh" connoted so many unpleasanties. For another, if flesh must be—why green? And in the name of all shivering deities, why suggest eating it?

"I have!" said Jefferson Poole. "If you could see yourself as I see you, with that sinful violet smudge against your cheek"—he squinted at her—"it gives you an ivory tone—a cold, smooth, sensuous ivory."

Please! said Isabel, shrinking, largely from habit. "I'll get something out of you that'll be worth going miles to see," Jefferson Poole prophesied darkly.

"I am not scared," said Isabel frostily. "No?" said Jefferson Poole. "Then why look it?"

He went over to where she stood, folded his arms, and stared down at her scowlingly.

"H'm'm. Too tight." He swept deftly down her arms, and loosed her right till it lay on her cheeks in two leaf-brown waves. "Better—but not right yet! Not—entirely—right—too much white silk collar—don't want anything showing but that scarf—makes it too thick—ought to be flesh, Isabella. I'm not going to bite."

"I am not scared," said Isabel frostily. "No?" said Jefferson Poole. "Then why look it?"

He went over to where she stood, folded his arms, and stared down at her scowlingly.

"H'm'm. Too tight." He swept deftly down her arms, and loosed her right till it lay on her cheeks in two leaf-brown waves. "Better—but not right yet! Not—entirely—right—too much white silk collar—don't want anything showing but that scarf—makes it too thick—ought to be flesh, Isabella. I'm not going to bite."

"I am not scared," said Isabel frostily. "No?" said Jefferson Poole. "Then why look it?"

He went over to where she stood, folded his arms, and stared down at her scowlingly.

"H'm'm. Too tight." He swept deftly down her arms, and loosed her right till it lay on her cheeks in two leaf-brown waves. "Better—but not right yet! Not—entirely—right—too much white silk collar—don't want anything showing but that scarf—makes it too thick—ought to be flesh, Isabella. I'm not going to bite."

"I am not scared," said Isabel frostily. "No?" said Jefferson Poole. "Then why look it?"

He went over to where she stood, folded his arms, and stared down at her scowlingly.

"H'm'm. Too tight." He swept deftly down her arms, and loosed her right till it lay on her cheeks in two leaf-brown waves. "Better—but not right yet! Not—entirely—right—too much white silk collar—don't want anything showing but that scarf—makes it too thick—ought to be flesh, Isabella. I'm not going to bite."

"I am not scared," said Isabel frostily. "No?" said Jefferson Poole. "Then why look it?"

He went over to where she stood, folded his arms, and stared down at her scowlingly.

"H'm'm. Too tight." He swept deftly down her arms, and loosed her right till it lay on her cheeks in two leaf-brown waves. "Better—but not right yet! Not—entirely—right—too much white silk collar—don't want anything showing but that scarf—makes it too thick—ought to be flesh, Isabella. I'm not going to bite."

"I am not scared," said Isabel frostily. "No?" said Jefferson Poole. "Then why look it?"

He went over to where she stood, folded his arms, and stared down at her scowlingly.

"H'm'm. Too tight." He swept deftly down her arms, and loosed her right till it lay on her cheeks in two leaf-brown waves. "Better—but not right yet! Not—entirely—right—too much white silk collar—don't want anything showing but that scarf—makes it too thick—ought to be flesh, Isabella. I'm not going to bite."

"I am not scared," said Isabel frostily. "No?" said Jefferson Poole. "Then why look it?"

He went over to where she stood, folded his arms, and stared down at her scowlingly.

"H'm'm. Too tight." He swept deftly down her arms, and loosed her right till it lay on her cheeks in two leaf-brown waves. "Better—but not right yet! Not—entirely—right—too much white silk collar—don't want anything showing but that scarf—makes it too thick—ought to be flesh, Isabella. I'm not going to bite."

"I am not scared," said Isabel frostily. "No?" said Jefferson Poole. "Then why look it?"

He went over to where she stood, folded his arms, and stared down at her scowlingly.

"H'm'm. Too tight." He swept deftly down her arms, and loosed her right till it lay on her cheeks in two leaf-brown waves. "Better—but not right yet! Not—entirely—right—too much white silk collar—don't want anything showing but that scarf—makes it too thick—ought to be flesh, Isabella. I'm not going to bite."

"I am not scared," said Isabel frostily. "No?" said Jefferson Poole. "Then why look it?"

He went over to where she stood, folded his arms, and stared down at her scowlingly.

"H'm'm. Too tight." He swept deftly down her arms, and loosed her right till it lay on her cheeks in two leaf-brown waves. "Better—but not right yet! Not—entirely—right—too much white silk collar—don't want anything showing but that scarf—makes it too thick—ought to be flesh, Isabella. I'm not going to bite."

"I am not scared," said Isabel frostily. "No?" said Jefferson Poole. "Then why look it?"

He went over to where she stood, folded his arms, and stared down at her scowlingly.

"H'm'm. Too tight." He swept deftly down her arms, and loosed her right till it lay on her cheeks in two leaf-brown waves. "Better—but not right yet! Not—entirely—right—too much white silk collar—don't want anything showing but that scarf—makes it too thick—ought to be flesh, Isabella. I'm not going to bite."

"I am not scared," said Isabel frostily. "No?" said Jefferson Poole. "Then why look it?"

He went over to where she stood, folded his arms, and stared down at her scowlingly.

"H'm'm. Too tight." He swept deftly down her arms, and loosed her right till it lay on her cheeks in two leaf-brown waves. "Better—but not right yet! Not—entirely—right—too much white silk collar—don't want anything showing but that scarf—makes it too thick—ought to be flesh, Isabella. I'm not going to bite."

"I am not scared," said Isabel frostily. "No?" said Jefferson Poole. "Then why look it?"

He went over to where she stood, folded his arms, and stared down at her scowlingly.

"H'm'm. Too tight." He swept deftly down her arms, and loosed her right till it lay on her cheeks in two leaf-brown waves. "Better—but not right yet! Not—entirely—right—too much white silk collar—don't want anything showing but that scarf—makes it too thick—ought to be flesh, Isabella. I'm not going to bite."

"I am not scared," said Isabel frostily. "No?" said Jefferson Poole. "Then why look it?"

He went over to where she stood, folded his arms, and stared down at her scowlingly.

Isabel fairly writhed. For one thing, the word "flesh" connoted so many unpleasanties. For another, if flesh must be—why green? And in the name of all shivering deities, why suggest eating it?

"I have!" said Jefferson Poole. "If you could see yourself as I see you, with that sinful violet smudge against your cheek"—he squinted at her—"it gives you an ivory tone—a cold, smooth, sensuous ivory."

Please! said Isabel, shrinking, largely from habit. "I'll get something out of you that'll be worth going miles to see," Jefferson Poole prophesied darkly.

"I am not scared," said Isabel frostily. "No?" said Jefferson Poole. "Then why look it?"

He went over to where she stood, folded his arms, and stared down at her scowlingly.

"H'm'm. Too tight." He swept deftly down her arms, and loosed her right till it lay on her cheeks in two leaf-brown waves. "Better—but not right yet! Not—entirely—right—too much white silk collar—don't want anything showing but that scarf—makes it too thick—ought to be flesh, Isabella. I'm not going to bite."

"I am not scared," said Isabel frostily. "No?" said Jefferson Poole. "Then why look it?"

He went over to where she stood, folded his arms, and stared down at her scowlingly.

"H'm'm. Too tight." He swept deftly down her arms, and loosed her right till it lay on her cheeks in two leaf-brown waves. "Better—but not right yet! Not—entirely—right—too much white silk collar—don't want anything showing but that scarf—makes it too thick—ought to be flesh, Isabella. I'm not going to bite."

"I am not scared," said Isabel frostily. "No?" said Jefferson Poole. "Then why look it?"

He went over to where she stood, folded his arms, and stared down at her scowlingly.

"H'm'm. Too tight." He swept deftly down her arms, and loosed her right till it lay on her cheeks in two leaf-brown waves. "Better—but not right yet! Not—entirely—right—too much white silk collar—don't want anything showing but that scarf—makes it too thick—ought to be flesh, Isabella. I'm not going to bite."

"I am not scared," said Isabel frostily. "No?" said Jefferson Poole. "Then why look it?"

He went over to where she stood, folded his arms, and stared down at her scowlingly.

"H'm'm. Too tight." He swept deftly down her arms, and loosed her right till it lay on her cheeks in two leaf-brown waves. "Better—but not right yet! Not—entirely—right—too much white silk collar—don't want anything showing but that scarf—makes it too thick—ought to be flesh, Isabella. I'm not going to bite."

"I am not scared," said Isabel frostily. "No?" said Jefferson Poole. "Then why look it?"

He went over to where she stood, folded his arms, and stared down at her scowlingly.

"H'm'm. Too tight." He swept deftly down her arms, and loosed her right till it lay on her cheeks in two leaf-brown waves. "Better—but not right yet! Not—entirely—right—too much white silk collar—don't want anything showing but that scarf—makes it too thick—ought to be flesh, Isabella. I'm not going to bite."

"I am not scared," said Isabel frostily. "No?" said Jefferson Poole. "Then why look it?"

He went over to where she stood, folded his arms, and stared down at her scowlingly.

"H'm'm. Too tight." He swept deftly down her arms, and loosed her right till it lay on her cheeks in two leaf-brown waves. "Better—but not right yet! Not—entirely—right—too much white silk collar—don't want anything showing but that scarf—makes it too thick—ought to be flesh, Isabella. I'm not going to bite."

"I am not scared," said Isabel frostily. "No?" said Jefferson Poole. "Then why look it?"

He went over to where she stood, folded his arms, and stared down at her scowlingly.

"H'm'm. Too tight." He swept deftly down her arms, and loosed her right till it lay on her cheeks in two leaf-brown waves. "Better—but not right yet! Not—entirely—right—too much white silk collar—don't want anything showing but that scarf—makes it too thick—ought to be flesh, Isabella. I'm not going to bite."

"I am not scared," said Isabel frostily. "No?" said Jefferson Poole. "Then why look it?"

He went over to where she stood, folded his arms, and stared down at her scowlingly.

"H'm'm. Too tight." He swept deftly down her arms, and loosed her right till it lay on her cheeks in two leaf-brown waves. "Better—but not right yet! Not—entirely—right—too much white silk collar—don't want anything showing but that scarf—makes it too thick—ought to be flesh, Isabella. I'm not going to bite."

"I am not scared," said Isabel frostily. "No?" said Jefferson Poole. "Then why look it?"

He went over to where she stood, folded his arms, and stared down at her scowlingly.

"H'm'm. Too tight." He swept deftly down her arms, and loosed her right till it lay on her cheeks in two leaf-brown waves. "Better—but not right yet! Not—entirely—right—too much white silk collar—don't want anything showing but that scarf—makes it too thick—ought to be flesh, Isabella. I'm not going to bite."

"I am not scared," said Isabel frostily. "No?" said Jefferson Poole. "Then why look it?"

He went over to where she stood, folded his arms, and stared down at her scowlingly.

"H'm'm. Too tight." He swept deftly down her arms, and loosed her right till it lay on her cheeks in two leaf-brown waves. "Better—but not right yet! Not—entirely—right—too much white silk collar—don't want anything showing but that scarf—makes it too thick—ought to be flesh, Isabella. I'm not going to bite."

"I am not scared," said Isabel frostily. "No?" said Jefferson Poole. "Then why look it?"

He went over to where she stood, folded his arms, and stared down at her scowlingly.

"H'm'm. Too tight." He swept deftly down her arms, and loosed her right till it lay on her cheeks in two leaf-brown waves. "Better—but not right yet! Not—entirely—right—too much white silk collar—don't want anything showing but that scarf—makes it too thick—ought to be flesh, Isabella. I'm not going to bite."

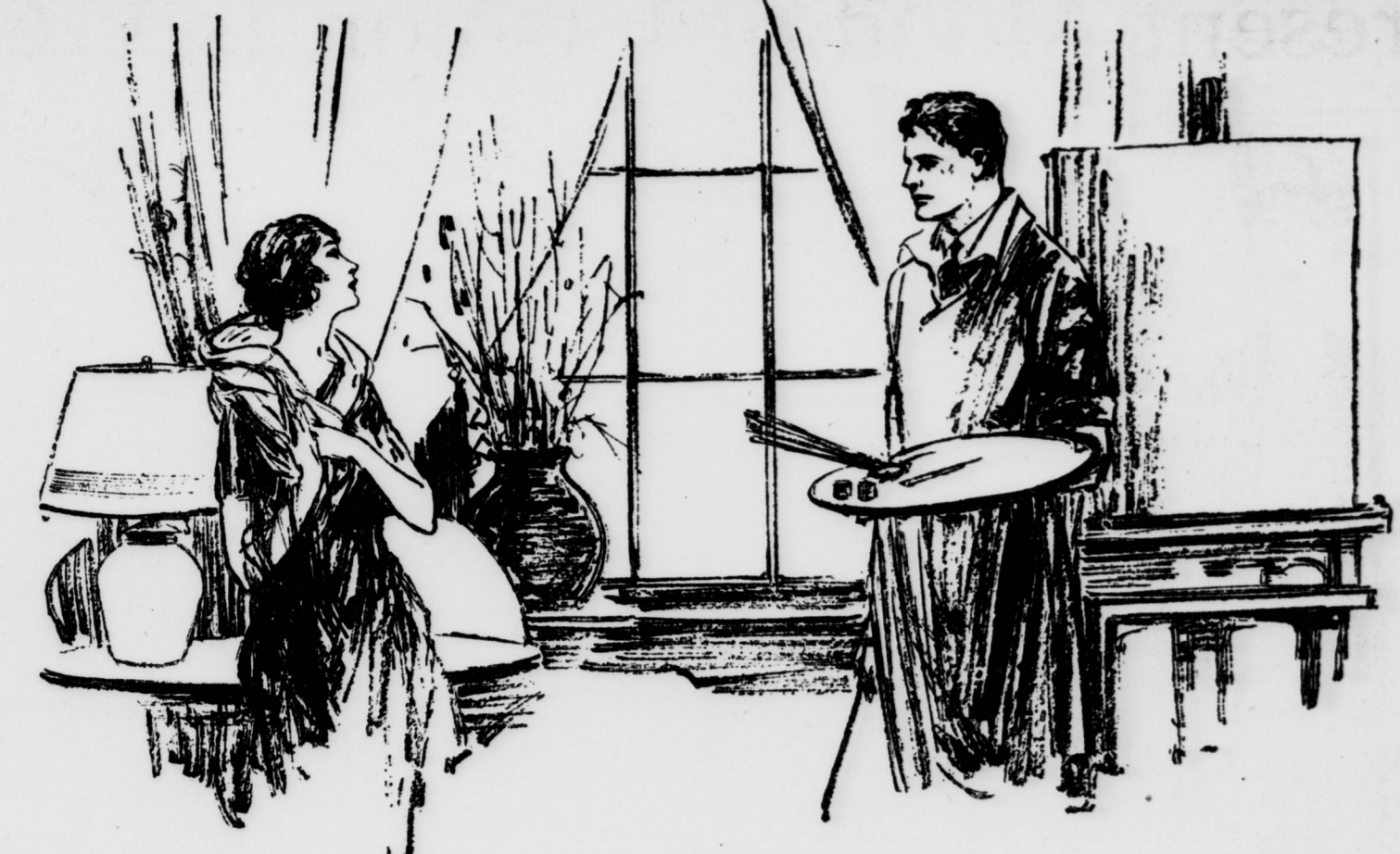
"I am not scared," said Isabel frostily. "No?" said Jefferson Poole. "Then why look it?"

He went over to where she stood, folded his arms, and stared down at her scowlingly.

"H'm'm. Too tight." He swept deftly down her arms, and loosed her right till it lay on her cheeks in two leaf-brown waves. "Better—but not right yet! Not—entirely—right—too much white silk collar—don't want anything showing but that scarf—makes it too thick—ought to be flesh, Isabella. I'm not going to bite."

"I am not scared," said Isabel frostily. "No?" said Jefferson Poole. "Then why look it?"

He went over to where she stood, folded his arms, and stared down at her scowlingly.



SHE WAS TERRIBLY AFRAID THAT IF SHE MOVED, IF SHE SPOKE, IF SHE STIRRED, HE WOULD KNOW—HE WOULD SEE—WHAT HE HAD DONE TO HER.

lightly clutched in her slim, gloved hands, tremulous with annoyance—other emotions less easily indexed. "Take off your hat, girl!" said Jefferson Poole. "We haven't got all day, you know. Take off that coat and stand over there by the table. Lean against it, if you want to." He was queening colors out upon a palette, as he talked. "Pull the scarf up higher. No, don't touch it. I'll fix it myself. Throw your things on that chair behind you. Look at that! It's flesh, Isabella. I'm not going to bite."

"I am not scared," said Isabel frostily. "No?" said Jefferson Poole. "Then why look it?"

He went over to where she stood, folded his arms, and stared down at her scowlingly.

"H'm'm. Too tight." He swept deftly down her arms, and loosed her right till it lay on her cheeks in two leaf-brown waves. "Better—but not right yet! Not—entirely—right—too much white silk collar—don't want anything showing but that